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## Oregon OSHA again cites PCC for safety problems (US)

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PCC

**Foundry operators at Precision Cast Parts pour molten alloy into the cast for an aerospace part. Parts are then taken to the cleaning department, where they're placed in tanks of caustic chemicals to remove most of the cast ( Credit Photo @ Benjamin Brink, The Oregonian/2011 )**

Oregon OSHA has cited Precision Castparts for 32 violations at its large parts campus in Milwaukie and Southeast Portland, raising significant safety concerns for the third time since 2008. The citations include \$26,050 in penalties related to cleaning operations in the two plants, which make precise steel and titanium components for aircraft engines, industrial gas turbines and the military. None of the violations was considered "willful," the most severe category. But 28 were serious, with nine having the potential to cause death. They stem from a 23-page complaint by **Ryan Edwards**, a temporary employee in 2011 who submitted the OSHA complaint after first sending it to the company. Some of the violations were repeats, OSHA spokeswoman Melanie Mesaros said, and the company did not correct some significant violations Edwards pointed out until after the OSHA inspection. "Some of their programs were seriously flawed," Mesaros said. "When you have repeat violations and you find problems that aren't being corrected, it's disappointing." Precision Castparts, which has until early March to appeal the penalties, declined to comment in detail. Spokesman Dwight Weber said in an email the company "will continue to work closely with OSHA to provide a safe working environment." Precision Castparts and Nike are the only Fortune 500 companies based in Oregon, with Precision Castparts recently reporting \$307.3 million of net income in its third quarter. It employs up to 1,200 non-union workers at the large parts campus at an average of \$21 an hour plus benefits. OSHA considers it a "high hazard" workplace. The company hit the news last May, when toxic chemicals were released after a power outage and equipment failure. Firefighters ordered nearby residents to shelter in place. No one was injured and the company says the community was never at risk. In 2008, OSHA found eight serious violations at the campus, with more than 600,000 square feet of buildings. OSHA issued a hazard letter "to address the disconnect that appears to exist" between operations and the safety department. After two injuries that required hospitalization in 2010, OSHA issued 24 serious violations. A report cited "systematic occurrences of electrical hazards" and "a lack of hazard recognition or a gap in the existing programs for recognizing and controlling the hazards." The latest inspections occurred from October to December in the cleaning departments, In a letter to Edwards, OSHA said it found his accusation of an "emphasis on getting work done quickly regardless



of worker safety issues” to be “true.” At the plants, workers shape and weld wax molds, dip them in a slurry, then coat them with sand to create a cast that’s filled in 2,000-degree foundries with titanium or steel alloys. In the cleaning departments, the parts are dipped in large tanks of high-temperature caustic chemicals — sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide — to remove most of the casting shell. In 2001, a worker died after falling into a tank while trying to remove a stuck part. Workers periodically enter empty tanks to clean them — known as “tank digging.” OSHA said controls that send caustic solution and steam into tanks in the titanium plant weren’t properly locked before workers climbed in last summer, posing a risk of death if they were turned on, and training in the “lock out/tag out” procedures was inadequate. Workers with less than 90 days on the job were assuming the role of tank entry supervisor, sometimes during their first-ever tank entry. Most employees in the cleaning departments are temporary employees, OSHA said.

Among other problems OSHA noted:

\* Worker hoists for “tank digging” were heavily worn and not designed for rescue.

\* Some chemical protective suits in the titanium plant had large holes patched with duct tape. When suits are damaged mid-shift, “employees are forced to work with unprotected sleeves.” \* Floors near tanks were extremely uneven due to shell buildup and deterioration from caustic chemicals, a tripping hazard.

\* Slings or hoists holding parts of up to 1,000 pounds in the steel plant were not blocked or cribbed before workers worked underneath.

The plants’ rates of injuries or illnesses leading to work days lost or restricted is more than double the manufacturing average in Oregon. But they’re lower than averages for some jobs, including roofing contractors, nursing home workers and workers at wood preservation plants. Edwards, 28, said he was offered a full-time job, but declined because of safety concerns. He still talks with workers there and has heard of some improvements in personnel and procedures. @hp-

“Hopefully, I’ve kind of set something in motion,” he said. “Fingers crossed.”

Source : Oregon Live

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